

March 4, 2017

Co-Chair Kennedy, Co-Chair Miner, Co-Chair Demicco, Vice Chair Flexer, Vice Chair Gresko, Vice Chair Somers, Ranking Member Harding, and Honorable Members of the Environment Committee:

Please accept this email as my official public hearing testimony for the following bills, and a request to bring up HB 5615. I am an aware, engaged and educated resident and voter (MPA from UCONN, BA in Political Science/Public Policy). I have worked in nonprofit animal organizations in CT and consider Connecticut to be a humane leader in animal advocacy; the bills below need your voice so CT can continue to lead in animal rights and welfare. The humane treatment for all living beings is of paramount importance in these trying and difficult political times.

1) OPPOSE SB 522 -- would allow bear hunting, which I strongly oppose.

As written, this Bill misses a crucial aspect of controlling bears WITHOUT hunting, which is dangerous and often unnecessary. Teaching residents how to reduce and remove attractants (e.g., accessible garbage, pet food left outside) is important and can go a long way to eliminating bears on people's properties. Additionally, and if necessary, informing individuals on hazing and exclusion strategies are the humane, simple, effective, safe and science-based solutions to conflicts with wildlife. An outrageous claim being made by proponents is that population size will double every few years - this is NOT TRUE and are not "alternative facts": bears are very slow-to-reproduce and in addition, have many natural checks to their population size. Slow reproduction rates make bear populations susceptible to overhunting. We must learn from recent experiences in other states, such as New Jersey where even mothers and cubs were recklessly killed, or Florida, where the state agency had to stop the hunt after one year because too many bears were killed. With roughly 700 bears in Connecticut, we need to protect and preserve these bears for future generations.

2) OPPOSE HB 5499 -- would expand Sunday hunting to allow use of shotguns, rifles, and muzzleloaders.

This Bill has been raised and failed many times in the last decade, for good reason. Do we, as a state, want MORE accidental deaths due to hunting? My answer is no. Connecticut is full of gorgeous trails, forests, lakes, and mountains that must remain safe, at least for one day, for individuals and families to enjoy and explore. While I know that hunting takes place, and I am against it, I DO NOT want to see or hear hunting taking place with the knowledge that animals are needlessly being slaughtered for "sport". Additionally, this bill does nothing to reduce the incidence of Lyme disease, as already evidenced in previous attempts to get this Bill passed and will not reduce the deer population in any sustainable way. We promote CT as a friendly and enticing state to hikers, birders, mountain bikers, explorers, trail runners, etc., so we must ensure that our public lands are safe, at least for one day.

3) SUPPORT HB 6335 -- ivory sales ban, which I strongly support, will clamp down on illegal ivory and rhino horn sales by prohibiting the sale of ivory and rhino horn within Connecticut. The illegal trade is horrifically cruel, on a scale that threatens extinction, is a known funding source for major terrorist organizations, and over a thousand park rangers have been killed by poachers while on duty. NY and NJ have passed laws, and CT MUST join them now. If we do not, we become a haven for illicit ivory and complicit in the slaughter and extinction of wildlife. Last year's bill included a report from the Office of Fiscal Analysis that anticipated 4-8 prosecutions per year if the bill became law...a tacit acknowledgment of ongoing illegal trafficking in our state. State bans are needed because ivory traffickers exploit federal loopholes. Despite federal regulations restricting interstate sale, import, and

export of wildlife products, certain ivory and rhino horns, including antiques and pre-CITES items, can be sold under the Endangered Species Act. Criminals capitalize on these loopholes by aging newly harvested ivory so that it appears old or using fraudulent documentation. Thus, legal trade serves as a cover for illegal ivory trade. This bill would NOT criminalize possession of ivory currently owned by Connecticut residents or prohibit inheritance or noncommercial gifts, nor would it restrict the sale or purchase by a museum, nor would it restrict the sale or purchase of bona-fide antiques and musical instruments that meet certain requirements.

4) SUPPORT HB 6334 -- would require registration for all brick-and-mortar animal shelters and allow for inspections and creation of regulations that define standards of care.

Having worked in a prominent CT animal shelter, I have seen (in other shelters) what a lack of standards does to animal care. This Bill would allow for early intervention that could curtail and remedy problems BEFORE they escalate into conditions that would warrant prosecution under animal cruelty statutes (CGS 53-247). Most important, this Bill could prevent needless animal suffering while saving time and taxpayer dollars associated with prosecution of cruelty cases.

5) Lastly, I ask that you bring up HB 5615 for a public hearing. HB 5615 would give local control to municipalities, allowing them to determine whether or not to ban trapping. Trapping is barbaric and indiscriminate (dogs, cats, and birds and other innocent wildlife are often caught in these traps). Traps are not effective in curbing undesired behavior nor does it control population size due to the high compensatory reproduction ability exhibited by most fur-bearing species. Learning how to remove attractants, exclusion strategies where possible, and, if necessary, how to haze, are the humane, simple, effective, and science-based solutions that I support, and I want my town to stand against the cruel, ineffective, painful and ineffective practice of trapping. Our neighbors in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and New Jersey are among other states who have banned or severely restricted use of leghold and body-crushing traps - let CT join them in being a humane voice for wildlife and animals.

I strongly urge you to vote in ways I've outlined above and to make Connecticut a safe place for all it's residents, animals and human alike.

Respectfully,
Robin E. Kane
Hartford, CT.